

resounding voice. He professed his faith in the potentialities of an army that had emerged from a revolution. Such an army, he said, could repeat the pattern of the prerevolutionary military organization but must have a new spirit and seek new forms. His speech was the highlight of the day.

Discussion of the chief question—the formation of the government—began the next day. The left claimed all power for the Soviets. The center leaned increasingly toward a coalition with progressive, non-Socialist elements, excluding the counterrevolutionary groups, but the spokesmen of the right wing of the Convention declared they would not participate in a coalition that excluded the Cadets, whom they considered the only influential non-Socialist group in the nation.

The Bolsheviks began to interrupt the speeches, shouting, “Disgrace! Bread!” to imply that the moderates in the Executive Committee were to blame for the shortage of food in Petrograd.

Voting started on October 2, after a week of speeches. The resolution in favor of a coalition government passed by 766 votes to 688, with 38 abstentions. Next, an amendment excluding the Cadets from the coalition was passed by 593 votes to 483, with 72 abstentions. Then the amended resolution was voted down by 813 to 180, with 80 abstentions. The Convention had failed.

The Convention then decided to elect a permanent commission—the Democratic Council—representing all democratic organizations, to act as a substitute for a parliament until the Constituent Assembly convened. More than four hundred persons refused to vote. The decision was taken by a majority of 829 votes to 106, with 69 abstentions. Organization of the Democratic Council began the next day. A throng of little-known groups claimed seats in the new body. The presiding board, refusing to admit some doubtful organizations, distributed 308 seats among the groups represented in the Convention. Bargaining went on without the customary obstruction from the left: The Communists and their sympathizers were absent, attending the session of the Petrograd Soviet in the Smolny, where they denounced the Democratic Council of Counterrevolution.

The Convention ended on October 5. The concluding session was gloomy. Chkheidze sat at a long table on the stage, a picture of melancholy and despair. Many chairs at the table were empty. I wanted to leave also, but Chkheidze implored me to deliver the concluding speech. There was not much to say about the results of the Convention. Then Chkheidze got up and left the stage, forgetting to declare the meeting adjourned.

The Convention had not solved the government crisis, but the Council it elected was later expanded—or perhaps just watered down—by inclusion of property-owning groups and representatives of